

**WESTON-SUPER- MARE TOWN COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE TOURISM AND LEISURE COMMITTEE
HELD VIA ZOOM
ON MONDAY 27th JULY 2020**

Meeting Commenced: 7.00 pm

Meeting Concluded: 7.51 pm

PRESENT: Peter Crew (Chairman), John Crockford-Hawley, Catherine Gibbons, Peter McAleer, Alan Peak, Marcia Pepperall and Sonia Russe.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Councillor Ian Porter, Malcolm Nicholson (Town Clerk), Tania Middlemiss (Assistant Town Clerk), Caroline Darlington (Tourism Manager), Emma Williams (Tourism and Marketing Officer), Fay Powell (Grounds Manager) and Samantha Bishop (Committee Officer and Office Manager).

14	<p>Apologies of Absence and Notifications of Substitutions</p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from Councillors James Clayton and Ella Sayce with no substitutions.</p> <p>Councillors David Dash and David Hitchins were absent from the meeting.</p>
15	<p>Declarations of Interest</p> <p>There were no declarations of interest received.</p>
16	<p>To approve the accuracy of the minutes of the Tourism and Leisure Committee meeting held on the 3rd February 2020</p> <p>The minutes of the meeting had been previously circulated with the agenda.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the minutes be approved as a true record of the meeting and signed by the Chairman.</p>
17	<p>Place Agency Proposal from North Somerset Council</p> <p>The report of the Town Clerk which had been submitted to the Town Council meeting on the 20th July, had been previously circulated.</p> <p>The Town Clerk, in principle, welcomed the interest from North Somerset Council in improving Weston and urged that the details needed to be considered. At the Town Council meeting it had been resolved that two members be appointed to the board of representatives of which the first meeting was to be held the following week. He would leave it to the officers with expertise in the area to advise further in terms of tourism and website. He advised that longer term, the Agency should become a Community Interest Company.</p> <p>The Chairman invited debate from members and the following points were made.</p> <p>It seemed that businesses wanted to come to Weston and that the role of Visit Weston was to keep its partners going.</p>

	<p>It was noted that Visit Somerset's report included the airport, Bristol docks and the river cruises which come to Weston on a day visit. Weston needs to be conscious and tap into this market.</p> <p>There had been a meeting held with officers to look at accommodating microsites from the Visit Weston site.</p> <p>North Somerset Council were not divulging much information on what they want for Tourism and so the Town Council must keep pushing for more information.</p> <p><i>Councillor John Crockford-Hawley joined the meeting at 7.06 pm.</i></p> <p>There being no further debate the report was therefore</p> <p>RESOLVED: Noted.</p>
<p>18</p>	<p>Tourism Function Update</p> <p>The reports of the Assistant Town Clerk and Tourism Manager Apr-Jul 2020 had been previously circulated.</p> <p>The Chairman voiced his thanks to the Tourism Manager for carrying on valiantly with the media interests and interviews when she had suffered a family bereavement.</p> <p>Members requested to know the current position of hoteliers now that the lockdown measures were lifting.</p> <p>The Tourism Manager reported that in general they were very confused on what to do. It was a complex issue where many zoom meetings had been held to help support them. The tourism team have provided advice in collaboration with other agencies and local government guidelines. This has not been made easy by the guidance released at short notice by government.</p> <p>Self-catering businesses were having a very difficult time with their insurance at risk of being invalidated if they open. On a positive note the Lauriston Hotel has reopened but bigger hotels such as the Seaward Hotel say they can't open until 2021 as it would prove too difficult. The majority of the hotels have opened in one way or another but there were extreme difficulties with day to day running.</p> <p>In response to a question regarding the Grand Atlantic hotel, the Tourism Manger informed that this had been bought by a similar company and would be loosely operating.</p> <p>The loss of the Grand Atlantic would not be too effective as they customers were mainly coach trippers who did not spend money in the town but this may have an effect on the suppliers of food/entertainment and employment.</p> <p>The biggest loss would be the closure of the Seaward as it had 55 rooms.</p> <p>Coach trips would be effected as they were only running at 50% capacity and outlays on PPE to adhere to government guidelines. However quite a few coaches have been in contact and have been and are planning on visiting</p>

Weston. Coach trips do spend money within the town and the feedback from the companies was positive.

A member thanked the Tourism Manager for representing Weston so well through the pandemic whilst experiencing a personal loss.

It was then queried what were the future plans for the lost children base that had been situated within the VIC. The Tourism Manager reported that North Somerset Seafront Events Team would not be staffing the VIC anymore and that the lost children function would be pushed through to the responsibility of the Beach Ranger service.

The Tourism Manager highlighted how fantastic it was for Weston to make it on to Sky news and how it had been a joint team effort. The team had developed an impressive PR list to support Weston in the future.

The Tourism and Marketing Officer added that Weston had also made it onto SNN and the New York Times.

Conversation ensued regarding the councils protocol when speaking to the media as certain councillors had been approached directly by the media.

The Town Clerk advised that the relevant chairman or officer would be authorised by himself to be interviewed by the media and that sometimes the window of opportunity is short. North Somerset Council were very strict with their combinations to the media but the protocol could be reviewed if necessary.

The Chairman informed that he was aware of all interviews undertaken.

The Tourism Manager was asked for her view on whether the VIC could reopen this season.

The Tourism Manager believed that a meeting had taken place with group leaders and the Town Clerk where the decision was made that it was very unlikely it could open based on Health and Safety advice received.

The Town Clerk corroborated and added that based on the measures that would need to be put in place, including the purchase of PPE and screens costing in the region of £1,000, there would be no income from opening. There could be no casual staff appointments made either which would make it very difficult to staff and open.

The Tourism Manager confirmed that as an alternative measure, the TV screen had been utilised to advertise Visit Weston partners and the telephone number was displayed and publicised where officers were picking up the calls.

The Chairman was pleased to hear of these proactive measures to support Visit Weston's partners.

The Tourism Manager added that the team were working remotely where the telephones calls were diverted and dealt with and the VIC was working well virtually.

	<p>The Tourism and Marketing Officer concurred that it was working well operating as a virtually and the team were doing everything they could. Other similar towns had not opened their VIC's and so Weston was not displacing itself from its competitors.</p> <p>The Assistant Town Clerk commended the work of the tourism officers who had worked exceptionally hard and had done a fantastic job in running a virtual VIC service and reported that the tourism function, including a new destination marketing campaign was running very well.</p> <p>It was questioned if a virtual VIC could be a model used for the future. This depended on North Somerset Council and the decisions they made with the Tropicana, but It was definitely something to consider for future years. There will always be a generation of people who like to visit a VIC public facing service.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the report be noted.</p> <p>18.1 Destination Advertising and Visit Weston Website Stats</p> <p>The reports of the Tourism Marketing Officer Apr-Jul 2020 had been previously circulated.</p> <p>The Tourism Marketing Officer reported that in line with our plans at the beginning of the year which had paused due to Covid-19. We had now re-launched a destination marketing campaign up to December 2020 where there had been a tentative agreement in place with Pear Communications. A new agreement with and extended period and more sites secured had been negotiated up to Christmas at no extra cost. It was hoped that other campaigns currently on hold could proceed both with Pear and other agencies up to mid-2021 in order to attract visitors for next year.</p> <p>The Chairman expressed that the focus now needed to be directed to New Year and Easter campaigns, for which Pear could be used.</p> <p>The campaign would be delivered over 3 months of which its reach would normally be 12.5 million. This had increased to over 50 million and would hopefully translate into heads on pillows and feet on the beach.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the report be noted.</p>
19	<p>Parks and Play Areas</p> <p>The report of the Grounds Manager had been previously circulated.</p> <p>The Chairman wanted to record the councils thanks to the grounds team for their continued work in challenging times and would like a letter sent to them to this effect.</p> <p>The Grounds Manager reported that, despite the play areas being closed, during the Lockdown, the Operational Grounds Team had been called to sites numerous times to re-secure the sites after being informed by the Police and the public that people had broken in. Throughout this time the team have worked with the local Police Beat Team and North Somerset Council's Community Response to deter</p>

youths from gathering in the play areas and in turn reduce vandalism and graffiti, as well as ensure their safety during the pandemic.

On the 4th July 2020 play areas were permitted to re-open. Government Guidance had been produced shortly before reopening which was challenging to meet and working with North Somerset Council and other Town and Parish Councils it had been deemed not practical to reopen them immediately as the council would have been uninsured.

Further discussions had taken place with our Health and Safety Advisor, Insurers, SMT and the Grounds Team. A decision had then been made along with other Councils after a time of reflection that play areas could re-open with a refreshed, practical approach to the Government Guidance.

The Grounds Team had carried out full operational inspections prior to opening and maintenance to enable them open at short notice.

Between the time of these inspections and the re-opening on Thursday 16th July 2020 some play areas had been vandalised and some unable to open until repairs were made. The worst affected were:

- Jubilee Park
- Hutton Moor Skate Park
- Waterpark
- Uphill Junior

The Waterpark still remained closed as contractors were needed to make repairs as they were too great for the Grounds Team to carry out. It was hoped that it would be reopened by the end of the week.

All sites were now open with the exception of the Waterpark, they have been maintained, grass cut and numerous signs have been placed to re-iterate the importance of Covid-19 guidance.

Calculations have been made for each site to stipulate a maximum number of people to be at each location at any one time, this has also been recorded on the signage and will be put on our website as a point of reference. Each site also has a unique Covid-19 risk assessment.

The Chairman asked whether the SLA with North Somerset Council could be reviewed considering the loss of season.

The Grounds Manager would need to check the exact figures, but the council could potential look at staffing the park themselves in future years. Considering the hit to the tourism industry it could be an opportunity for discussion.

The Grounds Manager reported that she was communicating with North Somerset Council to get more clarity around dogs on leads in unfenced play area sites.

The Chairman advised that the PSPO's were being reviewed to control dog orders and officers having the powers to fine on the spot.

RESOLVED: That the report of the Grounds Manager be noted.

There being no further business, the Chairman closed the meeting at 7.51 pm.

Signed:Dated:

Chairman of the Tourism & Leisure Committee